The Reformation: Its Heroes and Truths

HENRY LAW

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The Reformation

Its Heroes and Truths

Luther Celebration, 1883

Henry Law

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The Reformation

Its Heroes and Truths

I

Luther

ON the 10th day of November, 1883, four centuries will have elapsed since the great Reformer breathed the first breath of life. Surely such anniversary demands especial notice. Divine authority proclaims that the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. Hence to commemorate the Hero of the Reformation becomes a hallowed task. This scriptural injunction receives much weight in days when enmity to reformed truth darkens the horizon.

It would be a tedious and unedifying preface to trace the origin and gradual advance of Papal superstition. Let it suffice to state that throughout the fifteenth century it raised a gigantic head. It ruled in full-blown tyranny. The Pontiff's nod caused thrones to totter and sceptres to tremble in submissive hands. The temporal power of ecclesiastics enslaved the fairest portion of the earth. Opposition to it exposed to cruelties and miseries in every hateful form.

But the baneful effects of this system fell mainly on spiritual concerns. It blighted and obscured the pure truths of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. The Man of Sin assumed Divine prerogatives. He pronounced decrees in direct hostility to the heavenly doctrines of free grace. Access to God through the atoning blood of His only begotten Son was utterly denied. A man-

constructed institution arrogantly took the name of Church, and presented itself as the only path to heaven. Many Mediators dethroned the blessed Jesus. Spiritual worship degenerated into sensual forms. The attraction of pompous ceremonies and elaborate rites and the embellishments which art supplied captivated the deluded heart. The fancy was bewitched, and souls reposed on pillows of delusion. Religion was at best an outward form—a sterile soil in which no inward life or peace could grow. It is the glory of the Gospel to announce to sinners pardon and eternal life. By the Spirit's power it guides to that faith in the heart which constitutes saving union with Christ, and renovates the inner man. Popery trampled these principles beneath insulting feet, and upraised the Church to fancied pre-eminence. It invented the terrors of purgatorial fire, and offered rescue through priestly interference to be purchased by pecuniary offerings. Moreover it opened the way to all licentiousness of life by granting indulgence to live as lust or inclination might excite. The inspired Word as the infallible guide was sealed. It dethroned intellect from its high seat and utterly extinguished spiritual truth. This is but a faint picture of the miserable degradation which Popery enchained around its blinded votaries. Dark indeed were the days. Gospel light flickered in the socket. Pulpits no longer pointed to the Saviour's merits. AntiChrist seemed to claim earth as his own. His reign was unrivalled and supreme. But such iniquity could not for ever prevail. He who was seated in heaven laughed—the Lord held all adversaries in derision. His counsels were settled from everlasting. The Word of Jesus must prevail. All that the Father had given to Him would surely come, and no comer would be cast out. In the fulness of time He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Thus in these fearful times some rays of truth burst forth. From time to time witnesses for Christ arose. Wickliffe at Oxford was divinely taught. It was given to him to see and fearlessly to expose the fatal errors which

prevailed. He denounced the so-called sacrifice of the Mass, and proved that the repetition of the offering once made by Christ was a blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit. In addition he laboriously translated the Scriptures, and unlocked the treasures of Revelation. Huss, too, in Bohemia, had clearly sounded the Gospel-note, and by heroic death at the martyr's stake prepared the way for the approaching Reformation.

We thus reach the appearance of Martin Luther. He was born in a village of Saxony on the 10th of November in the year 1483. Thus, the call is loud this year (1883) to celebrate the fourth centenary of his birth. Surely it is a spirit-stirring occasion to bring exuberant thanksgivings to the God of all grace and power. This great Reformer was born in the hut of a lowly miner. As the first preachers of the Gospel were not among the potentates of earth, but among the lowliest of her sons, so too we find that God's chosen instruments to revive His truth belong not often to the high-born or the great. As a schoolboy he was sent out to beg from door to door. The seeds of great intellect soon became apparent, and his thirst for knowledge was intense. He was admitted to the University of Erfurth. Searching in its library he was guided to a Latin version of the Word of God. Eagerly he devoured its pages, and marvelled at its wondrous truths. Deep cravings were implanted for a life of elevated holiness. To live entirely to God became his all-absorbing desire. He resolved to relinquish all prospects of intellectual fame and worldly honour. In furtherance of this design he withdrew into the retirement of an Augustinian monastery. Its gates closed on him in his twenty-second year. If cloister-seclusion and rigid observance of monastic rule could bring true knowledge of God and peace of conscience Luther would have won the prize. But he soon learned the futility of outward mortifications. He drank in vain of the cup of penances. He found it to be worthless and dashed it from his lips. Misery was at its climax

in the young monk's cell. He hated life. He dreaded death. No self-made penances brought ease. At this juncture in the good providence of God the enlightened Staupitz visited the monastery. He came as Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch to guide to a true knowledge of the Word. He marked the woe-worn Luther, and soon gained his confidence. He applied the only remedy for his disease. He opened the saving truths of the pure Gospel. Luther listened, and with joy embraced the tidings. He found in them a full repose for his agitated mind. The burden fell. From darkness he became light in the Lord. Out of weakness he waxed valiant for the truth; from a trembler he stood an intrepid hero.

He boldly professed the Gospel which now illumined his heart. He was soon called to become a teacher in the newly established University of Wittenberg. He emerged from the cloister's gloom as vegetation from its wintry grave. Here he uplifted Christ with all the power of a vigorous mind, and the assurance of a deeply-taught believer, At this period he was especially directed to the weapon so bravely used by Paul-the text of Habakkuk: "The just shall live by faith." He tightly grasped the glorious truth of life only through the faith of Jesus Christ. This truth became the soul of his theology, the strength of his inner man, the sword by which he vanquished every foe, the staff of his support in every trial and temptation, the lever by which he subverted the fallacies and delusions of the Papal fabric. This principle checked him in the superstitious ascent of the so-called Sacred Stairs. It gave him intrepid boldness in the face of perils. It was his joy in life, the anchor of all his hopes—his triumphs over opposing fears, and the substance of his preaching. May this mighty truth ever be the glory of our Protestant pulpits! As it brightly shines, or only feebly glimmers, Churches flourish or decay. The young Reformer had now advanced to the grand knowledge that the Bible was the one infallible and all-sufficient fountain of heavenly teaching—that it contained all the truths

needful for salvation. By this he shivered the fables of tradition and the dreamy inventions of the Papal creed. By lip and pen he ceased not to proclaim the Bible as the only revelation of God's will. The heart thus taught could not he mute. But his field of success was narrow until Tetzel appeared, commissioned to enrich the Papal coffers by wholesale traffic in indulgencies. Our dauntless champion was inflamed with indignation. He publicly posted on the doors of All Saints' Church, in Wittenberg, the celebrated Theses which have been well termed the germs of the Reformation. With the rapidity of lightning the precious truth of the gratuitous remission of sins through the blood of the atoning Son of God without money and without price, flew as the grand lesson of the Bible on the wings of these Theses throughout Europe. Eagerly they were welcomed by multitudes weary of the fallacies and disgusted with the cupidities of Rome. This grand announcement of the truths of salvation was followed by Resolutions addressed to the Pope himself. In these there was no backward step, but a fearless repetition of scriptural doctrines.

In consequence he was summoned to Rome to answer to the charge of heresy. To enter that city was farewell to life. There the assassin's dagger, the poisoned cup, the dungeon's bars were ready for their victim. But God, watchful over His devoted servant, turned the Pontiff's mind to another plot. He fixed Augsburg as the place of trial. Thither Luther, against all remonstrances of timid friends, resolutely proceeded. He was bold in the confidence that God, whose he was, would not now desert him. He had not read in vain the Word to Moses, "Certainly I will be with thee." He knew the oft-repeated word "Fear thou not, for I am with thee." He remembered, too, the deliverance of Paul at his first answer before Nero. Thus he stood before the Legate of the Pope, invulnerable in the panoply of truth, and wielding the weapon omnipotent to pull down the strongholds of Rome. His feet were firmly set on the rock

of God's word. This he maintained to be high above all Popes and decrees of Councils. Blessed are they whose teaching flows in this unerring channel!

Tidings of his unflinching zeal and of the grand announcements of the Gospel spread marvellously. God seemed to say again, "Let there be light!" and there was light. Rome must now make a more determined effort to quench the spreading flame. After an interval in which he continued undauntedly to preach, Luther was summoned to the celebrated Diet of Worms. Strong dissuasives again urged him to non-compliance. His refusal is well-known. "If there be as many devils in Worms as tiles on the housetops, still I would enter it." Accordingly he persevered. No earthly assemblage ever equalled in brilliancy and grandeur that which was now convened. The youthful Emperor, Charles V, was here enthroned, surrounded by a multitudinous array of the mightiest princes and potentates of Europe. The Church supplied her noblest and most learned chiefs. Nothing was absent which pomp and grandeur could lend to dazzle, intimidate, and overawe. In presence of this mighty Court, the poor monk of Wittenberg stood alone. But knowing that the Lord was with him, he stood undaunted and undismayed. What heroism can God's grace impart! He looked to heaven. He looked not in vain. His ready answer was an appeal to God's Sovereign Word. For that Word he willingly could die, but he never would deny it. No retraction could be extorted. As the imperial safe-conduct secured his return, no immediate sentence was executed. He was dismissed. No longer under legal protection, he left Worms apparently exposed to a heretic's sure fate. But the friendly hand of a princely patron screened him from instant death, and concealed him for some months in the Castle of the Wartberg.

Here let this article conclude. Diffuse biographies draw an ample picture of his succeeding days. Through more than twenty

years he continued to grow in grace—to strengthen in his love for heavenly truth to draw fresh supplies from the well of life to proclaim Jesus as the One deliverer from the wrath to come—to exalt the Holy Spirit as the Author and Interpreter of the Word—and thus he meetened for the inheritance of the saints in light. At length, worn out with toil, and oppressed with a sense of deep responsibilities, he breathed his last during a visit to Eisleben, his native place, on the 17th February, 1546.

We are permitted in this year to celebrate the 400th anniversary of his birth. It is meet that this occurrence should kindle hallowed reminiscences in each Protestant heart. At this season devout thanksgivings should ascend to the God of all grace and love for giving to the world this noble champion—for revealing to him, the Gospel of His Son—for causing the scales of ignorance and superstition to fall from his eyes—for enduing him with such indomitable zeal, and courage—for upholding him through all the perils and trials of his arduous course—for enabling him to continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and never moved away from the hope of the Gospel; and, above all, for causing the Gospel to revive and triumph through his teaching. At this anniversary shall not our prayers be fervent that the light thus kindled by his word may never again be dimmed by Rome's soul-destroying errors! May the zeal of this Christian hero animate our hearts more fearlessly to maintain the truth of justification by faith alone, and the supremacy of God's sacred Word.

Eyes cannot be closed to the unhappy prevalency of the present day to disparage the memory of the heroes of the Reformation—to assail their names with calumny, and to prepare a backward road to the blindness which leads to the blackness of darkness for ever. But may the Lord arise, and may His enemies be scattered, and may this anniversary witness a grand revival of Protestant zeal!

II

Justification by Faith

"The just shall live by faith." —Romans 1:17

BLESSED indeed are these inspired words. May they ever be a blessing to all who hear and read them! Marvellous are the triumphs which they have effected. May these triumphs continuously swell until the Church militant shall sheathe the sword! They especially demand present notice. In this year we celebrate the 400th anniversary of Luther's birth. This was the text which, by the Spirit's power, kindled the full blaze of truth in his mind. It clearly revealed to him the mode of sinner's justification before God. He saw in it the inheritance through faith, of life eternal. It was to him the mirror of salvation's blessed scheme. It shone before him in full lustre as the essence of revelation. Thus it became the life of his soul. It ruled in his constant thoughts. It was the vigour and brilliancy of his teaching. It was the staff of his pilgrim steps, the mainspring of his ceaseless toil, the warmth of his intrepid zeal. It brought peace to his conscience, happiness to his heart, energy to his will. It was the weapon which he heroically wielded. By this the blinded Monk became a preacher of bright truth, and disinterred the Gospel, so long buried in Papal rubbish. It made him conqueror over every peril and every fear. Thus arrayed he was bold before the mightiest assemblages. It enabled

him to shiver all the arts and fallacies of Rome, and to wave high that torch of the Reformation which enlightened a benighted world, and gave birth to that liberty which has long been our joy, our strength, our pride, our glory. Surely it becomes us, especially at this season, to ponder deeply the volumes of truth contained in these words.

Let us then consider the title of believers—they are the just; next, their blessedness—they have life; and then the means by which this life is gained—faith in Jesus Christ.

The title of believers—they are the just

(1) They are "the just." Justification is their heaven-sent property. They are justified in the sight of God from all the guilt and penalties of sin. They are acquitted at the bar of justice as if they had never been polluted by sin's hateful touch. Not all the powers of hell can work their condemnation. They are pronounced to be innocent, and blameless of every offence. But how can this wondrous acquittal become theirs? Surely they were conceived and born in sin. Corruption was their cradle. Their inner man was alienation from the righteous law; their rebellious footsteps trampled on the requirements of God. How then can they be justified or pronounced righteous? The glorious truths of the Gospel here give light. God's co-eternal and co-equal Son assumes man's nature, and stands their substitute—their representative—their proxy. Christ, of God was made sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him. God, in His wondrous grace, wins and decrees and effects the transfer. "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way; but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" [Isa 53:6]. Hence their acquittal is complete and final. They appear before God pure and holy, without spot or blemish, even as His own beloved Son in

heaven. So marvellous is the truth, that to gain credit for it God confirms the tidings by expressive images. Give ear to the oft-recurring assurance. It flows as wave upon wave. “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” [Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12]. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” [Isa 1:18]. “As far as the east is from the west (an interminable space) so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” [Ps 103:12]. “He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” [Micah 7:19]. “In those days and at that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found” [Jer 50:20]. “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” [Isa 43:25]. Who will not from the inmost heart exclaim, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity” [Ps 32:1–2]. There is no rest for the soul until such blessedness is a realized portion!

The blessedness of believers—they have life

(2) The text leads onward to other heights. It is said: “They shall live.” All that constitutes life shall be their inestimable inheritance. Truly they were born dead in trespasses and sins. Sin, when it entered, utterly extinguished every spark of spiritual life. Their doom was to grope a darksome path through ignorance and error into the region which is termed “the second death.” But now the sentence is reversed. Life is restored. They live to God, and they shall live for ever. The Holy Spirit—The Lord and giver of life—by His renovating power has replaced the lost treasure Christ, who is their life, enters and reigns within. This life is hid with Christ in God. Satan cannot touch it. It is as high above his reach as God

Himself in the heaven of heavens. It is spiritual now, leading onward to life in glory. Thus they have spiritual faculties, spiritual perceptions, spiritual desires. The knowledge of God is restored. Communion with Him rules within. They know Him now as their Father through adopting grace. They are enabled to acquaint themselves with all His attributes, to love Him as His devoted children, to adore Him as the author and giver of every blessing which they realize, of every hope which shines within them. But their spiritual life in the fulness of its delights exceeds all thoughts to conceive—all words to paint. But to what does it lead? To the everlasting life of glory. Through the grave and gate of death the spirits of the just pass onward to perfection in the immediate presence of their beloved Lord. Absent from the body is to be at home with Him. The prayer is fulfilled, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." And yet a little while their quickened spirits shall re-enter resurrection bodies, in all things made like unto the glorious body of their Lord. Redemption shall be consummated, heaven shall be entered. But what that heaven is no thought can tell until that heaven be reached. Who will not from his heart exclaim: Blessed prospect! glorious hope? Who will not count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge which the Reformation restored? Luther was indeed a happy man when his soul feasted at the banquet of this truth.

The means by which the life of believers is gained

(3) The text proceeds to announce the pathway to this unspeakable blessedness. It tells that justification and life are the fruit of faith—"The just shall live by faith." Paul thus amplifies, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by

faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." We are thus led to gaze on this blessed principle. It is a free-grace gift. It is implanted and awakened in the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is no mere assent of the understanding to the revealed Word. It is entire submission of the will to the revelation of the blessed Jesus. It is the full reception of Him to live and reign in every faculty of mind, and every pulse of the whole heart. It is the eye which sees Him dying upon the cross —rising from the dead—ascending into heaven—ever living in intercession for us—and yet a little while about to revisit earth. It is the hand which grasps Him and holds Him fast. It is the foot which runs towards Him, and never stops until it reaches His wounded side. It is the appetite which feasts on the rich banquet of His finished work. It is the ear which listens to His calls and melting invitations. It is the lip which sounds aloud His praise, and cries unto Him with incessant cries. It is the whole soul won by His love —inflamed with adoration—devoted to His service. It is the fruitful parent of all holiness. It overcomes the world. It never leaves us till the gate of heaven is reached. It there knocks, and gains entrance by the plea, "Christ died." Then its work is over. This is the power by which all the blessings of salvation are grasped and retained. This shone brightly before Luther. It was the essence of his teaching. The fallacies and errors of Popery fled before it—the Gospel revived, Reformation was established.

What shame and misery would it be if this truth should ever be bedimmed in our beloved land! Rather let all zeal and energy awaken, and let the saving principle sound aloud from every pulpit, and be embraced by every heart, and descend from children unto children's children—"The just shall live by faith."

3
Wickliffe

SURELY thanksgiving is the happiest exercise of the heart. Our chief joy is to encircle God's throne with the praises of adoring love. Hence the most blessed life is that which abounds with fervent praise. The common themes which awaken these delights verily are countless: they flow in ceaseless stream. Contemplate our insular position—our shores protected by the ocean's walls—our temperate clime—our fertile soil—our well-watered fields, and vast sources of temporal abundance. Mark, too, our unrivalled Constitution—our limited Monarchy—our unfettered press—the pure administration of unsullied justice—schools for instruction of all grades—sufficient care of poverty in sickness and in age—our happy homes—our domestic comforts—our hallowed Sabbaths. These blessings raise us high above the nations of the world. Shall we receive them, and not bless the God who gives? An expostulating voice sounds around, "Forget not all His benefits."

But what are treasures of wealth, or stores of learning, or advance in art and science, and pre-eminence in civilization, compared with spiritual blessings! As time vanishes before eternity, so things temporal recede before things everlasting. What would earthly blessings be unless they led to spiritual peace and guided to a heavenly home! This thought suggests the contemplation of our

highest mercies; We have the light of Gospel-truth. The way to God, to pardon, and to life eternal, is our heritage. The pages of the Bible are open for perusal. Here is the blessing of blessings, and, by God's grace, we owe these blessings to the Reformation.

Can we utter the name of Reformation, and not feel that thanksgivings should be deep and fervent? This is the year in which these praises find especial vent. We are now called to think of Luther and the heroic grace and power imparted to him,—his noble triumphs over Papal thraldom and darkness; his disinterment of the pure truths of the Gospel. This year celebrates the fourth centenary of his birth. This grateful reminiscence is indeed due. With thankfulness we witness the zeal with which the memory of the great Reformer is prized and revered. But surely at this season we should not be forgetful of some heroes who preceded him in denouncing the corruptions of Rome, and who were the first to unfurl the banners of revealed truth.

England had seen bright days anterior to the blaze of light in Germany. Before Luther shone in full-blown lustre, our Wickliffe had arisen as a luminary of divine truth. He has been justly termed the Reformation's Morning Star. He had preached the Gospel more than a century and a half prior to the birth, of which we are now preparing to celebrate the anniversary. It is then a happy task to go back in thought to his noble work, and in thanksgivings for Luther to add, too, thanksgivings for the English Wickliffe. A hamlet in Yorkshire was the place of his birth in the year 1324. Little is known of his earliest years. No incidents are recorded. As a youth he pursued scholastic learning at the three Colleges of Queen's, Merton, and Balliol, in Oxford. Here unrivalled powers of intellect, quickened by indomitable industry, distinguished him. Ardent was his thirst for learning and keen his penetration; he reasoned with consummate skill, and forcible was the current of his eloquence. At first these gifts were devoted mainly to the literary pursuits of the

age. But as God sent Staupitz to enlighten the mind of Luther with the true knowledge of His Word, so at this time the teaching of Bradwardine became a ray of light to Wickliffe. This celebrated teacher was now proclaiming the Gospel-scheme of salvation. The glorious revelation soon charmed the intellect of Wickliffe. He heard, he marvelled, he admired! He found delight in pondering truths before which the theories of schoolmen were but darkness. He feasted on the wondrous plan of man's redemption from the ruins of the Fall; and of the pathway through grace to the celestial home. His intellect was enlightened and delighted. But for a time these truths lingered in the vestibule of speculation. He paused at the threshold, because he had no heartfelt sense of the miseries and penalties of sin. Up to this moment he had not fully embraced Christ as a personal and indwelling Saviour. But God, who works in His own time, now by His providential dealings gave new birth to his soul. The plague, which had devastated the length and breadth of Europe, reached the place of his abode. Multitudes fell around him; death stared him in the face. The grave seemed gaping to receive him. He was affrighted; terrors sprang up; he had grasped no living hope. He feared that his state might be eternal woe. But now the Gospel-truths which he well knew in letter, were brought to him in mighty power. He clasped the Cross of Christ, which hitherto he had only admired at a distance. He closely appropriated the atoning Sacrifice. Every fibre of his heart entwined around an indwelling Redeemer. He personally realized an interest in the Gospel-truth. He thus felt that Christ's atoning work, in all its efficacy, was for him. The wondrous story became the life of his soul. Thus God qualified him for the course on which he was now to enter. Strong in the faith of Jesus, and glowing in His love, he advanced to the Reformer's work. The sickle was sharpened, for the harvest was ripe. The stone and the sling were in the youthful hands, for the Goliath of error was ready for his fall. Clearly and

boldly he continued to proclaim at Oxford the all-conquering truths of redeeming love. The word was verified, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” Converts were multiplied, and heavenly light was rapidly diffused.

At this time disgust and indignation at the rapacity of the mendicant Friars particularly filled his mind. He boldly exposed the corruption and iniquity of their vile extortions, and showed their system to be fraudulent imposture.

He proceeded further to denounce the tyrannical ursurpation of the Tiara. The Pope claimed England as his fief; boasted that its monarch was his vassal, and demanded contributions from its revenues as God’s vicegerent upon earth. Wickliffe came forward, and was the first to shake to its foundations these arrogant pretensions. His logic was profound; his reasonings unanswerable; his deductions from Scripture carried irrefragable force. Thus he was the pioneer of liberty; and this English hero was the first to bring emancipation from fraudulent autocracy. He supplied the reasonings and the arguments which enabled England to resist and to defy the Pope. So he aimed the first blow at Rome’s secular power. All praise be to God who raised up this champion of Liberty!

He stopped not here. He proceeded to prove that the tree which produced such corrupt fruit, was corrupt in core, and in every branch. He applied the light of Gospel-truth to all Rome’s spiritual delusions. He proved that the sacrifice of the Mass was a baneful superstition. He exposed the blasphemy that Bread and Wine became the real Body and Blood of the Son of God. He pulled aside the veil which had hitherto obscured the frightful features of the Papal creed. He opened the door to admit true and spiritual worship. Thus, too, he was the first openly and boldly to assail the fables and deceits of the Antichristian usurper. Let us be thankful for him as the foremost in the noble army of Reformers. It becomes

us to exalt him as under God our pride and glory. It is not, however, the province of this article to be biographic. Let it suffice to say that alarm was felt at Rome. Again and again he was denounced as heretical. His trial and conviction were demanded; but God as often interposed. As a distinguished Prince of Saxony protected Luther, so the illustrious John of Gaunt and the widow of the Black Prince extended shields around him. Great, however, were the perils of this noble man; and a cruel death seemed often to be near. More than once the crown of martyrdom almost touched his brow. But signal providences screened him. Political events absorbed attention. Edward III was carried to his grave; rival Popes claimed the throne of the Seven Hills. While they hurled thunderbolts at each other, and each proclaimed his rival to be Antichrist, Wickliffe escaped prominent notice, and was permitted to retire to his peaceful parish of Lutterworth. There he gave his time to perhaps his grandest work. Assisted by a friend,—at this time one with him, but afterwards an apostate,—he accomplished the translation of the inspired Word into the Anglo-Saxon language. He unlocked the door for floods of heavenly light to permeate the land. Inestimable was this boon. It gave form and character and stability to our language, and checked its relapse to the confused Babel of ill-adjusted words. He well earned the title of the Father of English Prose.

But poor indeed was the literary treasure when compared with the spiritual gift. For what is the Bible but a revelation of God—His attributes, His will, His grace, His glory, directing to immediate intercourse with Him through the merits of His beloved, Son—proclaiming free pardon through atoning blood-diffusing peace in the conscience, joy in the heart, and meetness for eternal life. Thus Wickliffe stood a herald of Reformed truth.

In this year the anniversary of Luther loudly awakens love for these truths, and zeal to maintain and propagate them. More

precious are they than all wealth of worlds. Shall we not clasp them to our heart of hearts, counting all things but loss for their knowledge, resolved to transmit them pure and unimpaired to our children and children's children.

How vain are all pulpits which fail to exalt these Protestant truths! If they are ignored, or obscured, or denied, the preacher is as a pilot steering to hidden rocks—presenting a poisoned chalice—spreading a pillow lulling to the sleep of death—a signpost pointing to destruction. May England never see the day when these truths shall become dim;—for then farewell to all the happiness of her sons at home, and all the glories of her name abroad!

IV

Christian Liberty

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." —Galatians 5:1

THE four hundredth anniversary of Luther's birth calls loudly to a review of the spiritual liberty which the Reformation restored. Popery had cruelly enslaved the conscience and the mind. It had put forth appalling power to trample upon Gospel-freedom, and to forge the chains of ignorance and superstition. The Reformation burst the enslaving fetters, and enabled spiritual liberty to revive. Let happy thoughts of this blessedness now occupy our minds.

The very name of liberty is grand and ennobling. They who realize freedom valiantly lift up the head. They are intrepid and above all fear. Their minds are tranquil and their resolves undaunted. Widely different is the slave's condition. Sad is his misery. He trembles at a tyrant's voice, he pines in degradation. He cannot call existence his own property, for he only lives to do the bidding of a cruel taskmaster. This prelude leads to the contemplation of man's state by nature, and his recovery through Gospel-grace.

Earth's sons are cradled in Satan's dungeons. They are born his willing subjects. Their birthplace is captivity. They are devoid alike of will and power to throw off the enthralling yoke. From this sad doom the Gospel liberates. No sooner had the enemy prevailed,

than sweet mercy flew from heaven to announce that the subjugation was not perpetual—that liberation would surely come—that rescue was fore-ordained. Blessed truth—reviving promise—God-like grace—offspring of eternal love.

In the fulness of time the Eternal Son becomes our Liberator. He meets in conflict our cruel foe, He hurls him from his wrongful throne, He wrests the sceptre from his accursed hands, He tramples him beneath victorious feet, He calls on the prisoners to come forth, He proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, He makes His people free, and they are free indeed. He establishes a spiritual kingdom, in which service is joyous liberty. The Gospel, with its silver notes, invites to these realms of pure delight. Popery plotted to despoil us of all, but the Reformation has restored our right. Let this truth be now exemplified.

Sin, the main foe, no more hopelessly subjugates. This fact is conspicuous in the very name of the Captain of Salvation. He is called "Jesus because He saves His people from their sins." Terrific are sin's penalties, frightful is its doom, unending misery is its due. But the ransomed of the Lord are free. Jesus takes all their sins away. They are transferred to Him. He accepts the accursed mass. He removes to the uttermost the merited penalties, so that each believer may exultingly exclaim: Christ was made sin for me, purchased liberty is my inheritance for ever. Popery invented purgatorial fires. The happy believer exclaims, Christ died, and His blood is all-sufficient for atonement.

This sacrifice liberates from the curse of the law. We admire this code as the lovely transcript of God's essence. But its voice is stern against transgression. It demands love at every moment of time—in every movement of the mind. If there be failure, its inexorable curse is denounced, and must descend. No streams of penitence can avert the sentence. It is deaf to vows of amendment.

“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” But from this curse believers are totally and for ever rescued. Jesus presented Himself to personate transgressors. On Him the curse descended. In Him it expires. The believer smiles at its threats as a rescued mariner at the billows which threatened to engulf. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Let the blind votaries of Rome seek for security through the Confessional and man-invented absolution; the happy believer sits down under the shadow of the Cross with great delight, and smiles at all such priestcraft.

Next, Christ brings deliverance from sin’s subjugating power. It is, alas, too true that this enemy still lives innate in every breast; but it is powerless to enslave. Its dominion is a broken reed. The new-born may stumble, but through grace they rise to pursue the upward path. They are ingrafted into the true Vine, and therefore are no longer barren branches. They resist, and conquer, through the strength derived from the Saviour’s Cross. While Popery sells indulgences to revel in iniquity, the believer dies to sin and lives to righteousness in Christ.

Another precious liberty is theirs. At all times, in all places, they have free access to the Mercy-seat. With boldness they draw near. They are invited to open out their hearts—to tell their every trouble, need, perplexity, and doubt. Smiles await them. Ready answers cheer them. They cast down the burden of their every care, and rejoice that they are ever welcome, and never draw near in vain. They have liberty to encircle the throne with praises of adoring love. They bless the great Triune for this liberty—decreed in councils of eternity—purchased by the bleeding Lamb—imparted by the Holy Spirit. The Gospel found them slaves, and has exalted them to be kings and priests unto God. Popery closes the door and forbids immediate access, except through mediators many, who are

mediators none. But the Reformation calls us boldly to draw near.

The Gospel admits to a heavenly banquet. God's children are welcomed to a Father's board. They partake of more than angels' food. To them the Redeemer's flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed. They bring not a repetition of the one offering once and for ever made. The Reformation liberates from such amazing superstition.

They have liberty to clasp their Bibles to their hearts, assured that God here speaks from His high throne. How grand this boon! Every word is great with inspiration. The mysteries of the everlasting covenant are unveiled, and sinners are taught all things needful for life here and glory hereafter. There is liberty to grasp all the promises; their riches are infinite; their fulness is beyond measure. Popery would hide this volume; but the Reformation makes it the common heritage of all earth's sons. Delighting in this liberty can we sufficiently give praise!

The Gospel raises to other heights of freedom. The world, of which Satan is the god, is a tremendous tyrant. It twines its chains around resistless multitudes. It leads some captive by bewitching smiles. It lashes others by threats into compliance. But again Jesus brings liberty. "He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." The love of God implanted in the heart by its attractive influence supersedes other affections. The happy believer, gazing on Jesus—basking in His smile, listening to His voice, glorying only in His name, looking onward to the realms of light—turns from enticements which can never give repose or satisfaction. Here is liberty which cloistered seclusion and monastic vows can never give.

The fear of death is mighty to affright. It snaps the thread which binds men to this world, and launches into eternity. Unbelievers possess no refuge from its terrors. But to the believer death comes a welcome friend. It delivers him from the burden of

the flesh, and wipes away all tears, and terminates all pains. It bears him to the immediate presence of his beloved Lord, and to the blissful company of the spirits of just men made perfect. There is no need of the Papal fancy of extreme unction. The Reformation extinguishes such groundless fatuity.

Meet exhortations spring from the foregoing contemplation. Do the eyes of any rest on these lines who are strangers to the charms of this freedom? The call of Jesus is loud, and sweet, and universal. May the Holy Spirit, with His all-conquering might, His persuasive energy, His God-like love, give power to flee to the Redeeming Cross, to hide in the wounded side, to wash in the all-cleansing fount, to seek shelter under the cover of the all-justifying Righteousness, and thus to escape from the darkness and thraldom of the cells of Satan, and to enter into those realms of liberty where all is peace and joy.

Others, perhaps, may read who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. May the Spirit enable them to wax bolder and stronger in this life-giving faith, to reflect more brightly the heavenly light, to maintain more immovably these principles, and never to turn a backward look, or take a receding step towards that debasing superstition with which Rome enthrals her votaries, and from which the Reformation has made us free. Can we give thanks enough for Luther and his glorious work? Let grateful observance of the 400th anniversary of his birth testify that England is one with Germany in giving honour to this illustrious champion.

V
Tyndale

As in vernal days clouds and sunshine quickly interchange, so alternations diversify the history of the Church. The candlestick is removed from flourishing communities, and again relief appears where need is greatest. It has been so from the earliest days. It will be so till the grand consummation. When the pious Abel fell beneath the murderer's blow, the Gospel of Eden's Garden was threatened with extinction. But brief was the serpent's triumph. We soon read of a revival, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." The people of God were reduced to straits when Noah was bid to construct the Ark. He soon trod upon renovated soil, and continued a preacher of righteousness. Idolatry seemed to be universal when Abraham was called to be the father of a chosen race. Thus too, when days were very dark, prophets arose to diffuse light. As time went on, when declensions abounded, teachers were inspired to uphold the cause of God.

But the approaching anniversary of Luther's birth calls us to descend from God's ancient dealings, and to ponder the mercies of the Reformation period. Not pausing on the history of Huss, of Bohemia, and Jerome, of Prague, let attention be riveted on England. Here the tyranny of Popery was widely spread and deeply rooted, when Wickliffe, our Morning Star, shone forth. Intestine

feuds soon engrossed the attention of the distracted land. Sad was the relapse to deadly superstition; but God, remembering His mercy, gave Tyndale to the world. Six years before the birth of Luther this noble champion, styled “the Apostle of England,” commenced his earthly career. He was born at North Nibley, a village of Gloucestershire, between the Cotswolds and the Severn, in the year 1477. His parentage was not obscure; but no records preserve incidents of his youth. His education advanced amid the lectures of Oxford. Here he was distinguished by aptness to learn, clearness of intellect, sweetness of diction, charms of gentle disposition, and unsullied purity of life. But his main delight and his unwearied search was devoted to the New Testament of Erasmus. The Holy Spirit, the Author of the blessed Word, was his mighty Teacher. If his mind had been invigorated by scholastic toil, his heart was renewed by divine illumination. The Gospel entered his soul with all-conquering power. With little help from man, he became a new creature in Christ Jesus—old things passed away, all things became new. The holy flame which warmed his enraptured heart could not be repressed. The mighty truth was exemplified in him, “To know Christ savingly is to proclaim Him lovingly.” It was his joy and constant work to reveal to the young students of Oxford the full salvation of the blessed Jesus.

He soon discovered that such teaching rendered Oxford no longer a safe abode. His love of learning directed him now to Cambridge. Here he became acquainted with Bilney, who, like himself, had been taught with little guidance from man the knowledge of the pure Gospel. Young Frith, who subsequently became Latimer’s teacher, was soon associated with them. Happy, doubtless, were the hours which these young converts passed in Christian fellowship, and in meetening. for the stake before them. Together they lived, delighting in the Lord, and subsequently they each attained the crown of martyrdom. Thus contemporaneously,

but entirely apart from Luther, God was rekindling the Reformation-torch in England. Tyndale and Luther, though one in Christ, and called to be co-Reformers and allies in hostility to Rome, at present were strangers to each other.

It would be sweet digression to enlarge on the career of these youths thus under discipline for the martyr's stake. But space forbids. A brief extract, however, from Bilney's letter to Bishop Tonstal will surely find excuse. The enlightened convert thus describes the entrance of truth into his heart:

> Looking into the New Testament (recently translated by Erasmus), by God's special providence, I met with those words of the Apostle St. Paul: 'This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, whereof I am chief.' O most sweet and comfortable sentence to my soul! This one text, through God's instruction and inward working, did so exhilarate my heart, which before was wounded with the guilt of my sins, and almost in despair, that immediately I found wonderful comfort and quietness in my soul, so that my bruised bones leaped for joy. After this, the Scriptures became sweeter to me than honey and the honeycomb; for by them I learned that all my travails, fastings, watchings, redemption of masses, and pardons, without faith in Christ, were but, as Augustine calls them, 'a hasty running out of the right way.'

Tyndale soon retraced his steps to his native county. Here he entered as tutor into the family of Sir John Walsh, of Sodbury Manor. This hospitable mansion was open to many of rank and learning. Tyndale was present at their frequent discussions, and always held the New Testament by his side. By reference to this inspired guide he exposed the ignorance and defeated the fallacies of Popish disputants. His opinions were pronounced to be heretical. He was summoned to answer for his offences before the Ecclesiastical Court of Gloucester. At this tribunal his replies were

so clear, his references to Scripture so pertinent, his reasonings so irrefragable, that no ground of condemnation could be found. He was dismissed with stern rebukes and mandates to relinquish erroneous teaching. But out of the fulness of the heart the mouth must speak. In the neighbourhood of Sodbury, and especially of Bristol, he continued to teach and preach Christ Jesus. The ignorance of the priests amazed him. He clearly saw that the fallacious tenets of Rome rested on ignorance of God's Word. He felt, let the Bible go forth, and it will subvert the fabric of superstition and delusion. He uttered the immortal saying, "I will strive that every boy who drives the plough shall know more of God's Word than all the priests." He felt that the Bible given to England in England's language would make England free. He found, however, that his continuance at Sodbury would bring suspicions and distress to his patron. He thought that the palace of Tonstal, Bishop of London, famed for patronage of literature, would give him refuge and leisure to pursue his work. Disappointed, he accepted an asylum in the house of a noble merchant, Humphry Monmouth. He found, however, that he could not prosecute his work without peril to himself and friends. He therefore crossed to Antwerp. Here he relaxed not his efforts to give to England an English Bible. After some period of labour he removed to Cologne, to superintend the work of printing. But orders were given to seize the pages. He therefore fled into Germany. Here he first saw his fellow-worker in the Reformation-cause. It is needless to state the joy with which Luther and Tyndale met, and their mutual encouragement in their grand design. Without needless amplification, let it suffice to state, that this unwearied labourer was soon apprehended and consigned to the prison at Vilvorde, near Brussels. Here he languished in captivity for nearly three years, but not without seals to his ministry. As at Philippi, the family of his gaoler was led to embrace the faith of Jesus unto

salvation.

But while Tyndale lived, Popery trembled. The thought was madly entertained; that to slay the man would be to slay the truth. The Emperor's edict was obtained; and the meek, the pious, the loving Tyndale was condemned to the stake. No complaints, no protests against injustice and cruelty escaped his lips. Full of Stephen's spirit, he prayed for England's King. Strangling mitigated his sufferings, and then his body was consigned to the flames. The fire might burn the lifeless hand which once had held a Reformation-pen, as previously the remains of Wyckliffe. It might consume the early copies of the translated Scriptures which first reached our metropolis; but it could not burn the imperishable work, and the plough-boy proficient in its teaching was enabled to be wiser than the Vatican's whole conclave. It survived as the exemplar of our Authorized Version, and thus became the honoured precursor of our polished Revision. How fervent should be blessings to our Heavenly Father, for raising up this noble proclaimer of Divine Truth! How cordial should be our praises to Him for enduing this hero with such love of the Sacred Word—such zealous anxiety to circulate it throughout our land—such indomitable industry for persevering in his work! Such praises and thanksgivings are at all times due, and may they at all times be rendered. And we rejoice that on Nibley Knoll and on the Thames Embankment commemorative monuments stand indicating local and national reverence for this immortal benefactor. This is a day when especial praises are evoked. We are on the eve of celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Tyndale's colleague in the glorious Reformation. We rejoice that enthusiastic feeling burns throughout the land which gave birth to Luther. May the like feeling spread through the length and breadth of our own beloved country! May we clasp to our hearts the blessed Scriptures with increasing love! May delight in those hallowed pages become the constant inmate of

our souls! May we turn with deeper loathing and abhorrence from the darkness and the bondage with which Popery too long enveloped our land! May we mourn that its fatal influence still degrades and ruins so vast a portion of mankind! May it be our constant labour of love to expose its deadly errors—its corrupt superstitions—its soul-destroying fallacies—its deadly enmity to the cause of Christ! But what if dark clouds in the horizon should seem to threaten? What if some, like Lot's wife, turn a lingering look to the accursed and devoted abode of Anti-Christian frauds! What if for a season they should regain appalling influence! We know that all such darkness precedes light. It may for a little season beguile, but truth is mighty, and must ultimately prevail. The day comes on apace when angels' voices shall proclaim "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." Therefore, in Reformation-truth and in Luther's Commemoration we rejoice—yea, and we will rejoice.

VI

The Unfolded Bible

"The Word of God is not bound." —2 Timothy 2:9

MANY, and most humbling, are the proofs of human frailty. The most sad, perhaps, is our disregard of common blessings. Possession excites little praise; while privation calls out loud laments. This feeling exists, alas! in the most holy and the most ungodly. The stream which daily flows is scarcely marked: its interruption would occasion amazement and alarm. How different will be the Heavenly home! Common possession there will awaken universal praise. While we acknowledge our common fault, it is a profitable exercise to seek amendment. It is both wise and good to select a prominent instance, and to deduce from it spiritual improvement. The Bible at once presents a conspicuous example. How many hands hold it; how often is it opened, but how imperfectly is its value realised!

We proceed, then, to establish that the Bible is indubitably the richest treasure which the world contains. When we read in faith, we feast on more than angels' food. If we should strive by similitude to exhibit the value of this blessing, thought would fail, —the largest intellect would be feeble for such effort.

Imagine the primeval darkness before the birth of light. It inadequately shows the chaos of a mind without God's Word.

Conceive the inevitable ignorance. Look to the firmament on high. From the chambers of the east a glorious orb goes forth. As it strides forward in majestic course it fills the world with light, and joy, and plenteousness. When it descends into its western couch, the heavens are bespangled with a glittering host. Look around upon creation's wonders. Mark the mighty ocean in its expanse and depth, its storms and calms. View the mountains, towering to the skies. Contemplate the plains, the vales, the meadows, the gardens, the groves, the streams, replete with beauty and animate with diverse life. Consider, too, the seasons as they come and go with undeviating regularity, crowning the world with gladness.

Let us now ask, Whence all this wonder? Who formed, who regulates, who sustains this framework of marvel and benevolence?

We look to natural reason for reply. The downcast head and puzzled look betray ignorance. It may presume to hazard guesses; but the conjectures only subject it to ridicule and scorn. We open the Bible. At once a majestic sentence gives full intelligence: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In subsequent passages it states, concerning the Lord Jesus, that "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." The same voice continues, "By Him were all things created that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." Here is common knowledge, too often undervalued. Let us bless God for it. The Bible alone confers it. Without this Book we are in more than midnight darkness.

The Creator is thus revealed, and we see Him God over all, blessed for evermore. Do we here seek to be enlightened with knowledge of our God? The Bible vouchsafes the revelation. The truth is given. In the Godhead there are Three Persons—co-

essential, co-equal, commensurate in eternal being, co-ordinate in majesty and glory. A marvel of marvels is here unveiled; a mystery is announced which no angel can comprehend; which no unaided intellect could ever have conceived. From the Bible we receive it. Let us bless God for the imparted truth.

If we proceed to Providence, it shows a series of astounding events. Doubtless there are super-abundant proofs that benevolence holds the sceptre; but there are marks that disorder has wide sway. Nature seems at times wrapt in confusion and dismay. Storms rage, hurricanes sweep the earth, the thunder roars, the lightning flashes, the fabric of the world quakes. Disease in countless forms seizes its painstruck victims. The scythe of death does ceaseless work. Hearts are broken, tears flow, the sigh is oft-times heard in the morning, "Would God it were evening!" and in the evening, "Would God it were morning!" War desolates the earth. The arm of man is lifted against his fellow. Swords are red with blood. Cannons roar. Plains are strewed with the wounded, the dying, and the dead.

Whence all this misery in a world the creation of a blessing God? Baffled reason sees the difficulty, but can give no interpretation. We open the Bible, and we learn what nothing but the Bible could disclose. We read of the tempter and of his arts and power; how man fell, sin entered, corruption dethroned purity, every thought became evil, and that continually; and how enmity trod down the love of God. Thus wrath was awakened. Vengeance bared his arm, and the sluices of misery flew open. Here is the solution of the mystery; and with the Bible in our hands we turn to sin and say, "We know the birthplace of all evil."

Next, let anxious thought inquire,—Is there no remedy? We open the Book again. A blessed revelation replies in a voice from Heaven. We are informed of recovery, restitution, redemption, reconciliation, atonement, expiation, full pardon, of the loss far more than amended, of Divine righteousness provided instead of

creature obedience. Do we seek clearer light on these amazing truths? Reason here can give no aid. It is impotent to teach the source and method of Redemption's scheme. Angels cannot dive into the depths of these glories. We open our Bible. Full revelation is as an ocean of light. We read of eternal love, the councils of peace, the covenant of grace, the remedy ordained before the foundation of the world. We gain full information of Atonement—its origin, plan, and execution. Extinguish Bible light, and what true knowledge have we of sin and its remedy, of the fall and of recovery, of corruption and the seed incorruptible, of the curse and of the blessing, of hell and of Heaven? Unaided reason may toss hopelessly on these billows, but it can reach no shore. It may rove in a vast wilderness; but it can find no resting-place. It may wander in a labyrinth, but can discover no escape. We refer to the Bible, and all inquiry is satisfied. The voice of God is heard traversing its pages and proclaiming salvation through the gift and work of God's only-begotten Son. At sundry times and in divers manners the wondrous work is depicted. Varied types, multiform emblems, significant portraits of the Saviour are bright as in a mirror. Prophetic announcements give a full-grown figure of the coming Saviour. In the fulness of time the Antitype appears. Every prediction is fulfilled. Every expectation is realised. The Holy Spirit, in His over-shadowing power, constructs a tabernacle for the abode of Deity. A virgin conceives. Jesus is born. Could reason in all its vaunted efforts have imagined an event like this? The Bible tells the story. Can we adequately bless God and clasp it too tightly to our hearts!

A train of confirming miracles is added. Events appear which no human forethought could have imagined. See the blessed Jesus on the cross. Mark His rising from the dead. Follow Him ascending to the Heavens. Hear the triumphant voices of attendant hosts. Listen to the Father's welcome. Behold Him enthroned on the right

hand of the Majesty on high. Open the ears of faith to hear His never-failing intercession. Ponder the blessings which continuously descend. Read this mass of truth, which the Bible, and the Bible alone, reveals, and again give thanks and praise.

The Book ceases not with these announcements. Glorious tidings still illumine its pages. The same Jesus who ascended up on high, returns with clouds, and every eye shall see Him. Attendant angels and the spirits of just men made perfect throng the train. The trumpet sounds. The graves open. The dead in Christ rise first. The elect are gathered from the four winds; they which are alive and remain to the final day, are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and are for ever with Him. We read of the beauties and the glories of the millennial reign; and closing words tell of the end, when Jesus shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.

Such is a glimpse of the revelations of this blessed Book. All is infinitely beyond what uninspired man could have discovered. Much is above our reason; nothing is opposed to it. The verifying faculty does homage while it confesses that it could not have approached in imagination the outskirts of these truths. Shall we not then from our inmost souls bless God for this thrice precious Book, and rank it above all earthly wealth? Shall we not rejoice in it as in God holding converse with us?

Put all the learning of the world into one scale, and the Bible into the other, it infinitely outweighs the accumulated mass. Thus men of the mightiest genius, such as Newton and Locke, have prized it as a Heaven-born treasure. In every age it has been brought to the bar of trial. The verdict has always been,—It is indubitably from Heaven. The history—the poetry— the inimitable recitals—have placed it on a pinnacle which earth-born powers could never reach. Statesmen have found in it the best maxims of government. The greatest of conquerors carried it in his baggage.

The most eloquent of orators sought to kindle his fire in its pages. An eminent Archbishop receiving it as a parting gift, exclaimed, "All I am as man, as minister, as author, I owe to this blessed Book!" Wise was the counsel of an aged saint to a young preacher: —"Study well your Bible. You will find all your sermons written in it." It is the Spirit's conquering sword. Jesus quoted, and Satan fled. The Saviour's whole career was according to the Word. He died with it upon His lips. How many of His followers have done the same!

As the sun is seen by its own light, so the Bible's origin is proved by its communings with the heart. It reads the inner movements, hidden from all but the eye of God. Apart from the Bible, what knowledge have we of the nature, power, and victories of prayer? If we approach the sages and oracles of the heathen world, and ask, Will God indeed hear and give answer? the reply is, or rather the guesses, are vague, contradictory, unsatisfactory, confused. The Bible speaks, and shows God on His mercy-seat, more willing to hear than we to pray, and ready to give more than we can ask or think. The glorious promise sounds aloud, "Ask, and ye shall have."

Countless instances crowd to attest the truth. At the voice of prayer the heavenly orbs have paused in their course. The waters of the sea have opened a dry path. The heavens have withheld the necessary rain, and again have poured down their floods. Armies have been driven back. Camps have been strewed with slain. Prison doors have flown open, and chains have fallen from captive hands. An earthquake has shaken massive walls. Other instances might be added to show that prayer moves the Hand that rules the world. It has been well said, "The Bible might be styled, The Exploits of Prayer." Its every promise may be taken by the prayer of faith to the Throne of Grace, and shall be fully redeemed.

Show me the man who is most conversant with its contents,

and I will show you the wisest man on earth. For in Christ, the main subject, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is the wisdom of God unto salvation. Show me the man who makes it his constant study, and I will show you the happiest man on earth, living at the very gates of Heaven. David exclaims, "Oh! how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day." He is the blessed man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord," and who meditates in it day and night. Show me the man who is ever feasting on this Heaven-sent manna, and I will show you the holiest man on earth. It is the prayer of Jesus, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." It is the assurance of Jesus, "Now ye are clean, through the Word which I have spoken unto you." Show me the man who dares to disparage this Word, and I will show you the veriest driveller, the most blinded dullard, the most conceited trifler in the school of ignorance.

This is the Book—so grand, so glorious, so sublime, the very voice of God, the teaching of the Holy Spirit—but alas! so often disregarded because it is within all men's reach. Surely it is wise exhortation. Let it be the delight of our lives, and the inmate of our hearts. In the lowliest cottage it is the highest wisdom. In the halls of literature it is the loftiest eminence. The peasant reads; and by the Spirit's teaching learns to be a king and a priest unto God. The monarch reads, and he sees a crown of glory which fadeth not away.

While we bless the Triune Jehovah for salvation decreed and accomplished, let us add blessings for this Book of Life. Let the gracious gift be the theme of common thanksgiving, and the guide of common thanksgiving.

While our hearts swell with daily thanks to God for the precious volume, shall we fail to intermingle praises for the work of the Reformers! To each of them thanks are due for the Word of God in the language of their country. Before their light shone forth the

Bible was locked up in the prison-house of a dead tongue. Now it is accessible to every reader from the highest to the lowest grade.

Who can measure the oceans of delight and saving knowledge which have been thus widely spread. The Monarch has read and has longed for the crown of life and glory. The poor man has read, and has realized the heirdom of treasure incorruptible—undefiled—and that fadeth not away. The feet of the young have been guided into the narrow way of life-tottering old age has been supported by staff strong as the everlasting hills. Tears have been wiped from weeping eyes—groans of suffering have melted into songs of praise: tormenting passions have been lulled to rest—boisterous lusts have become calm in heavenly purity.

But beyond all the truth of God—of heaven—salvation has gone forth conquering throughout the world. Popery has received its death wound. It still may dim envenomed shafts; but it never can again prevail. The Bible shows its open page: the benighted enemy quails. At every turn it is met by the all-conquering word, "It is written." The Adversary flees. The Believer cries unto his God, "Do as Thou hast said," and anti-Christian superstition is levelled to the dust. Glory be to God in the Highest for this precious gift, and glory evermore that the Reformers have unlocked the prison-house of an unknown tongue, and presented the unfolded pages to readers of every creed.

About the Author

LAW, HENRY (1797–1884), dean of Gloucester, born 28 Sept. 1797 at Kelshall rectory, Hertfordshire, of which parish his father was then rector, was third son of George Henry Law [q. v.], bishop successively of Chester and of Bath and Wells, by his wife Jane, eldest daughter of General James Whorwood Adeane of Babraham, Cambridgeshire, formerly M.P. for that county. Archdeacon Paley, a great friend of his grandfather and father, was his godfather. He went first to a private school at Greenwich, kept by Dr. Charles Burney [q. v.], and, in 1812, to Eton, then under Dr. Keate. On 10 Oct. 1816 Law entered St. John's College, Cambridge, graduating B.A. in 1820 as fourth wrangler. In 1821 he was elected classical fellow of his college, and was soon after appointed assistant classical tutor, becoming tutor in due course; in 1823 he proceeded M.A. He took great interest in the establishment of the classical tripos, and was one of the first examiners (1824–5). In 1821 Law was ordained deacon and priest by his father, then bishop of Chester, who appointed him in 1822 to the vicarage of St. Anne, Manchester, which he resigned the next year on becoming vicar of Childwall, near Liverpool. In 1824 he was appointed archdeacon of Richmond; in 1825 vicar of West Camel, Somerset; in 1826 archdeacon of Wells and prebendary of Huish and Brent in Wells Cathedral, when he took up his residence at Wells; and in 1828 residentiary canon of Wells. The last office he held, with the archdeaconry, till his removal to Gloucester. As canon of Wells he took an active part in, and was a large contributor to, the restoration of Wells Cathedral. After holding for a short time the

vicarage of East Brent, Law became in 1834 rector of Weston-super-Mare, then only a fishing village; and in 1838 accepted from the Simeon trustees the rectory of Bath. In this laborious and responsible post his health soon broke down; he resigned it in 1839, and for a time travelled on the continent. On his return in 1840 he was again appointed to Weston-super-Mare, and remained there twenty-two years. During that time the little village became an important watering-place, and Law was foremost in promoting the religious, educational, and social interests of the town. The parish church was thrice enlarged; three other churches were built and endowed, largely at Law's own expense; and excellent schools were built. A dispute having arisen among the townspeople about the purchase of a town-hall, Law bought the building at a cost of £4,000 and presented it to the town. In 1862, on the death of Dean Rice, Law was nominated by Lord Palmerston to the deanery of Gloucester. The state of the cathedral at that time was far from satisfactory, and immediate steps for its improvement were taken. The deanery was restored at considerable cost; the restoration of the choir and chapels was successfully carried out under Sir G. G. Scott, the dean being the largest contributor; the beautiful reredos was erected; and the musical character of the services, which had fallen very low, was raised to high excellence. Law was a most liberal supporter of religious societies and public charities, and his private beneficence, for the most part secret, was munificent. He died 25 Nov. 1884, aged 87, and was buried in the Gloucester cemetery. He was unmarried.

Law was throughout his life one of the leaders of the evangelical party in the church, and one of the last of the old school. While at Weston he held from time to time large meetings of the chief members of his school of thought, at which were originated many institutions which have since become important. Among his intimate friends were the first Earl Cairns, first Earl

Cairns [q. v.] and the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury [see Cooper, Anthony Ashley]. Through the latter he was frequently consulted by Lord Palmerston as to episcopal appointments, his recommendations being almost invariably accepted; he himself refused a bishopric more than once.

Besides his mathematical attainments, Law was an admirable classical scholar, with a wide knowledge of English literature. His conversational gifts and powers of memory and quotation were remarkable, and were retained to the end of his long life. Besides a large number of tracts, leaflets, etc., Law wrote: 1. *Christ is All*: vols. i–iv.—*The Gospel in the Pentateuch*, London, 1854–8. Of this work more than 120,000 copies were sold; vol. v. *Gleanings from the Book of Life*, London, 1877. 2. *Beacons of the Bible*, London, 1868. 3. *Family Prayers*, London, 1868. 4. *The Forgiveness of Sins*, London, 1876. 5. *Family Devotion; the Book of Psalms arranged for Worship*, 2 vols. London, 1878. 6. *The Song of Solomon, arranged for Family Reading*, London and Gloucester, 1879 [1867?]. 7. *Meditations on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, London and Gloucester, 1884.

[*Record*, 28 Nov. and 5 Dec. 1884; *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 29 Nov. 1884; autobiographical notes in the same in 1885; private information; personal knowledge.]

J. R. W.

Dictionary of National Biography, 1885–1900, Volume 32 Law, Henry by John Addison Russell Washbourn.

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